

PATENT

Appl. No. 09/879,794
Amdt. dated November 3, 2004
Reply to Office Action of May 19, 2004

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously presented) A method for increasing the bowl life of a cereal product, said method comprising
 - (a) contacting said cereal product with substantially pure water or with steam, and
 - (b) drying said cereal product to its original water content,thereby increasing the bowl life of the cereal product.
2. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said contacting is by spraying water on said cereal product.
3. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said contacting is by misting said cereal product with water.
4. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said water is at least about 90% pure.
5. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said water is between about 50 and about 150° F.
6. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said water is between about 70 and about 100° F.
7. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said cereal product is a ready-to-eat breakfast cereal.
8. (Previously presented) A method of claim 7, wherein said ready-to-eat breakfast cereal is a flaked cereal.

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9. (Previously presented) A method of claim 8, wherein said flaked cereal is selected from the group consisting of a corn flake, a wheat flake, an oat flake, a barley flake, and a rice flake.

10. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein said cereal product is a fried or baked cereal chip.

11. (Original) A method of claim 10, wherein said fried or baked cereal chip is a corn chip.

12. (Original) A method of claim 10, wherein said fried or baked cereal chip is a tortilla chip.

13. (Original) A method of claim 1, wherein the improvement is an increase in bowl life of a ready-to-eat ("RTE") breakfast cereal.

14. (Original) A method of claim 13, wherein said RTE cereal is selected from a flake, an extruded cereal piece, and a nugget.

15. (Original) A method of claim 14, wherein said RTE cereal is a flake.

16. (Original) A method for reducing the friability of a potato chip or of freeze-dried food, said method comprising

(a) contacting said potato chip or freeze-dried food with water, and

(b) drying said potato chip or freeze-dried food to its original water content,

thereby reducing its friability.

17. (Original) A method of claim 16, wherein said contacting is by spraying water on said potato chip or freeze-dried food.

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18. (Original) A method of claim 16, wherein said contacting is by dipping said potato chip or freeze-dried food with water.

19. (Original) A method of claim 16, wherein said water is between about 50 and about 150° F.

20. (Original) A method of claim 16, wherein said water is between about 70 and about 100° F.

21. (Currently amended) A method for increasing shelf life of a shelled nut, said method comprising

(a) contacting said nut with water, without boiling the nut, and

(b) promptly drying said nut to its original water content,

thereby increasing its shelf life.

22. (Original) A method of claim 21, wherein said contacting is by spraying water on said nut.

23. (Original) A method of claim 21, wherein said contacting is by immersing said nut in water.

24. (Original) A method of claim 21, wherein said contacting is by pouring water over said nut.

25. (Original) A method of claim 21, further comprising subjecting said nut to light abrasion in the presence of said water.

26. (Original) A method of claim 25, wherein said mild abrasion is caused by contacting said nut with a second nut.

27. (Original) A method of claim 26, wherein said nut is moved against said second nut by placing said nuts in a movable container and moving said container.

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28. (Original) A method of claim 26, wherein said nut is moved against said second nut by placing said nuts on a surface and agitating the nuts.
29. (Original) A method of claim 26, wherein said nut and said second nut are of different types.
30. (Original) A method of claim 21, wherein said nut is a peanut.
31. (Original) A method of claim 21, wherein said nut is selected from the group consisting of almond, cashew, walnut, hazelnut, pecan, macadamia, pistachio, Brazil nut, and filbert.